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The Washington City Ring.
Speech of Hon. Robert
B. Roosevelt, 1873.

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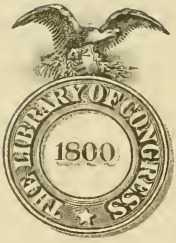

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The Washington City Ring.

SPEECH

OF

HON. ROBERT B. ROOSEVELT,

OF NEW YORK.

DELIVERED

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

FEBRUARY 11, 1873;

ON THE AFFAIRS OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

WASHINGTON:
F. & J. RIVES & GEO. A. BAILEY,
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1873.

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The Washington City Ring.

The House being in Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union, and having under consideration the Army appropriation bill—

Mr. ROOSEVELT said:

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I thank my colleague [Mr. WOOD] for his kindness in yielding me the floor. I also wish to express my obligations to the House for permitting me an opportunity to reply to aspersions and malignities the grossness of which has rarely and the untruthfulness of which has never been exceeded. For weeks past the press of this city has been filled with all manner of abusive and scurrilous attacks upon me for my course of action in reference to the Board of Public Works in this District; for my efforts to expose the iniquities and outrages which are being perpetrated on the residents here, and the bold and reckless way in which the money of the people is being squandered by a ring of officials who are appointed as a species of commission to govern them, and whom they cannot remove.

I was fully prepared, in undertaking the defense of the citizens of this District against the Board of Public Works, to meet with precisely the same treatment that I had encountered when battling against the prototype of this board, the Tammany ring in the city of New York. I anticipated that I should be blackguarded and vilified. I anticipated that a servile press would be used against me in every possible way, and that all the influences which could be brought to bear by the board would be exerted either to force me out of the contest, or to compel others from whom I had to receive information to cease furnishing me with it. But, sir, I have never yet been frightened off by any such means.

We all know that a stream can never rise above its source, and we may expect from foul lips foul words. The gentleman who took occasion—not the gentleman, I will not defile the word by such a use of it—the person who took occasion in one of the papers of the city a short time ago to make most blackguard and insulting allusions to me is the vice president of the board, and as such is fond of building sewers. I can only say that if he were to take himself as a model he would make a sewer that could carry more filth and dirt than the thirty-foot Tiber span. A dunghill will be a dunghill though you gild it an inch thick with gold stolen from the public treasury. When ability seizes absolute power we admire, although we may suffer and fear, but when coarseness and vulgarity climb by devious means and through roads leading directly under the frowning walls of a State prison, into prominence and influence, we expect them to carry with them the slime and filth of the gutter from which they sprang. I leave these men to the laws. I make no attempt to bandy words with them. I should not even have noticed their attacks but that these were calculated to affect legislation, and were carefully brought to the notice of all the members of the House. By the connivance or neglect of the Doorkeeper, and entirely contrary to all propriety, the most contemptible of these articles were allowed to be placed upon the desk of every member, so that he could hardly help seeing them. Apart from this, such scur-

rilities, for they are nothing else, would not be worthy of notice, for time will punish the authors and vindicate my course of action.

Look at the Tammany ring in the city of New York to-day. One man gone no one knows whither; lost to sight, but by no means dear to memory, though he has been very dear to the citizens of New York. Another one standing face to face with the gloomy portals of a prison. Others scattered, some here, some there, their power broken, their followers turning traitors and giving evidence against them; the whole fabric of their evil grandeur dissolved like a dream of the night, and punishment coming resistlessly and relentlessly onward. I leave the board here to the same fate, and when I have closed these remarks I shall have nothing further to say to them. The laws will answer them much more effectually than I can, and will answer them as certainly as retribution follows crime. It may be sooner or later, but the time will surely arrive. I may not be a partaker in the triumph of honesty. I may be even defeated, but where I leave the work, other hands will take it up and carry it forward. It will go on and on until right and justice win the day. "Though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small."

I shall now take up one or two of the charges made in the newspaper press, such only as I think worth answering, leaving the rest to the contempt of silence, and occupying the time of this House with personal matters as little as possible. These charges are contained in the publication of a pretended interview with the person to whom I have already referred.

The first charge brought against me by this person was that I had applied for a position for an individual by the name of Charles Riley under the Board of Public Works. Is that a charge of any consequence? Is not every member of the House guilty of the same act, if it be an act to be ashamed of? It is then alleged that I was offended because his salary was not sufficient, and a pretended conversation is given between him and some employé of the board, in which he threatened them with my vengeance. I have here the affidavit of Mr. Riley utterly denying these charges of threatening that I would attack the board if he did not get an increase of salary, or asserting that he had any influence over myself. He denies the allegations made against him in their whole scope and meaning, and he further states what is the simple fact, and what I hereby fully confirm, that from the day on which he left the office to the time he made this affidavit he has never spoken to me about the Board of Public Works. I would not have gone through the labor of this investigation for ten times his salary, and the entire affair is so trivial and so ridiculous that I shall not even read his affidavit.

It is further intimated that I voted for a bill to put the sum of $100,000 into the hands of the Board of Public Works. They do not say nor appear to know what that bill was, nor do I; but I can say this without trenching upon the silence usually maintained regarding the action of committees, that I believe I never cast a vote for the Board of Public Works that was not unanimous. But I am confident that if I ever voted for such a bill, and it was so profitable to the board, Mr. Riley would not have been turned out of office by insufficiency of salary.

It is further charged that I obtained by surreptitious or indirect means proof-sheet copies of the report of the board to the President, that I had been using those proof-sheets dishonestly, deceiving this House, and doing injustice to the board. I have here on my desk, and now hold up that members may see, the four copies of the report of that board. One of them, which was the first I obtained, and I hence conclude the original one that was issued and transmitted to the President, has on it the name of the Philadelphia Ledger. I do not know how it got to that office, and I do not care to tell how it came into my hands. Another has upon it the name of Hon. Luke P. Poland, of Vermont. How I got it from that gentleman is a matter between him and me. But if either of these was stolen from the Board of Works or obtained by any improper or indirect method, here is *prima facie* evidence that it was so obtained by that gentleman, or by some one in the Philadelphia Inquirer office. Of course the assertion, like many others from the same source, is utterly unfounded, and these reports were regularly printed and issued.

All these four volumes are apparently similar. They are bound in the same way, except

the one bound in boards. They have the same indorsement. To the eye they seem one and the same thing, and yet they are all different. No two of them are alike. The title-page upon each copy is the same: "Report of the Board of Public Works of the District of Columbia, from its organization until November 1, 1872;" and yet on examination we find strange and curious dissimilarities. In plain words, these reports have been altered for a purpose. Changes have been made with the express intention of misleading this House and covering up errors and misstatements which had been exposed. In a previous speech, when I had only two of these reports in my possession, I alluded to the fact that in one copy a portion of the report, that contained on the last page and giving the cost of much of the work, had been suppressed because perhaps it was supposed that it contradicted the Board of Public Works, who were demanding far higher prices from the Government. To meet this that page is reproduced in the third report, if I may designate them by the order in which they were apparently printed, while other alterations are made to counterbalance it. I will call attention to the fact that I have made three addresses—they were so hastily delivered I cannot call them speeches—three desultory series of remarks, and that the board has made three corrected reports.

After every one of my addresses they got out a different report, adding to or changing the figures, and then undertake to go before the people or come into this House and say I have falsified the record. Because the figures I give are not in their second report, they cast insinuations, with a truculence which accompanies successful guilt, upon my accuracy. But I shall leave this matter, reverting to it more in detail when I come to point out the precise alterations, in reply to the speech of the Delegate from the District of Columbia, made in defense of the board and printed in the Globe of February 9.

I shall now take up another scurrilous insinuation which was intended to reflect upon my election. I received the nomination of all the Democratic parties in my district except one faction of Tammany Hall which was in rebellion and was largely composed of the worst elements. My election took place after the United States election law was passed which provided for the selection of two supervisors and the appointment of ten deputy marshals at each polling place. The statute provided that one of the supervisors should be taken from each party and that these two should count the votes, but when I applied for the appointment of those in my interest I was told that they had all been "given" to my adversary. This fact was stated by me at the time, in a letter to the public, and admitted to be true; so that all the supervisors were wholly in the interest of my opponent, and were selected by him or his friends. There were over seventy polling places in my congressional district; so that there were appointed nearly one thousand men to work and vote against me, men who were paid by the United States and who had all the power and authority of the Government behind them. This advantage was used ruthlessly, my supporters being arrested on every species of pretext, with or without foundation, and held in $10,000 bail each—a bail it was impossible for them to give. In one case the person who had charge of the tickets for an entire ward was seized at four o'clock of election morning simply because he had changed his place of residence, although it was as well known that he resided there as that Horace Greeley resided at Chappaqua. This was carried so far that I was compelled to resort to my rights under a State law which authorized candidates to appoint a person at each poll to see the ballots counted. Under this provision, I selected friends to discharge the duty of seeing a fair count. They were refused admittance to a few polls, which in every case gave a heavy majority against me. In spite of these difficulties, however, I carried every ward included within my district and polled 10,702 votes, while my opponent only received 5,501, although he had the Republican nomination, which usually carries between four and five thousand.

But as insinuations have been made against the integrity of my past public career, I will, if the House will excuse the egotism, go over a part of my personal history. I was always a Democrat as I understood the meaning of that term, a free-trade representative of the rights of the people. During the rebellion I was a war Democrat, being active in organizing the war Democracy and being treasurer

of the great meeting held in Cooper Institute. I never believed that the old-fashioned fighting Democracy should be led by or surrendered to traitors, and gave time and money to help recruit our armies. I helped organize the Loyal National League, being president of the ward association in my ward, and was one of the founders of the Union League Club, leaving it only when it became not a national but a partisan body. In local politics I was a reformer, being one of the founders of the Citizens Association and on its executive committee till I entered into more active political life. Then I took part in the opposition to Tammany supremacy and became one of the leaders of the party which was striving to purify Democracy. When the grand uprising against the corruptions of the Tammany ring took place I was one of the two Democrats who spoke at the first meeting at Cooper Institute at a time when the enemy were still all powerful and when such a proceeding was a bold and dangerous step. I was selected one of the Committee of Seventy, and was last fall intrusted by my associates with the sole charge of organizing the canvass for the reform candidate at the mayoralty election, which resulted in the crowning success of the work of reform. Under such circumstances, and with such a record, is it any wonder that I oppose the Board of Public Works in this District. I have grown into such a confirmed reformer that I have even tried to reform the rules of this House which make it so difficult for me ever to get the floor, and to save the time wasted in calling the yeas and nays, and to improve the ventillation of this Chamber where we are hourly being stifled by bad air. Such, if the House will excuse me for referring to it, is a brief record of my public life. Can the gentleman who represents the District on this floor point to a better one? I will at least do him the justice to say that he also is credited with having had something to do with recruiting.

I have now done with the charges contained in the paper referred to, not answering the rest simply because they are unworthy of a reply. Lest the House should be misled, however, by the unanimity of the press in this District in favor of the Board of Public Works, I will refer to a fact that was proved before the committee of investigation last year. An organized plan was made to subsidize the press, $143,635 62 being paid nominally in seven months, but really in about three months, for that purpose. This was mostly incurred when the board were trying to induce the people to vote for their $4,000,000 loan bill, and was spent in advertising that loan, although it was perfectly understood all the while that not a dollar of it would be negotiated in the District.

While speaking of that loan I may as well explain why it was so generally approved—a point that has been made against me on several occasions. Tickets for and against the bill were printed by the government; those in favor of it were distributed, and those against it were suppressed. The scheme was simple but effective, as every member of this House who has run in a city district well knows. It was in speaking of this attempt at purchasing the press that I incurred the displeasure of my friend Donn Piatt of the Capital, which had a hit at me the other day. I have always admired the brilliant editor of the Capital, and could forgive his injustice for his wit; but last year, in a speech on District affairs, I mentioned the fact that his paper had received its share of the plunder. I said the Capital had received $2,144 64—I had almost forgotten the cents—and that Donn Piatt seemed to have gone dog cheap, for I considered him worth twice the money. So I do; but if he differs from me I will retract and apologize; he ought certainly to know best. I owe an apology also to another gentleman, from whom I received the following note:

No. 1209, SIXTEENTH STREET, NORTHWEST.
WASHINGTON, D. C., *June* 8, 1872.

DEAR SIR: I find in this morning's Patriot the concluding portion of your speech upon frauds in the District, delivered in the House of Representatives May 17, 1872, where the following inaccuracy occurs: "Every paper, no matter how petty or worthless, had a share of the spoils;" also, of course, the following sweeping sentence: "The watch-dogs, great and small," &c., referring to the papers aforementioned.

The truth in the case is that The Little Christian Magazine, now suspended, of which I was the publisher, did not receive a single penny from these spoils; neither could the whole of it, to use your own expression, have bought it up. No, sir; it will dye first, I can most positively assure you. You have wronged me, sir.

Yours, very truly, VICTOR HANNOT.

Hon. R. B. ROOSEVELT, *M. C.*

I can only say that, to judge by the fact tha the editor of The Little Christain Magazine intended to "dye first," either he must have been a "little off color" before, or I had some

color for my charges. Seriously, however, I do not mean to charge that respectable and honorable papers may not receive advertising from a person or a public body without selling their independence. But I do say that $143,000 spent in this small city in a few months only needed the confirmation of subsequent acts of servility to be converted from a payment into a bribe.

I will now leave these personal matters and proceed to answer the speech of the Delegate from the District of Columbia, which was intended as a reply to my first exposure of the misstatements contained in the report of the Board of Public Works. I shall confine myself to argument, paying no more attention to his numerous unparliamentary insinuations than I would to the barking of a yellow dog running down Pennsylvania avenue.

He first charges me with making a misrepresentation, because I computed the hundred and fifteen miles of pavement at thirty-two feet wide. There is no doubt about there being a misrepresentation, nor as to who made it. I simply took it from the report of the Board of Works, which contains these words:

"One hundred and fifteen and thirty-sixth hundredths miles of improved carriage-way pavements, assuming the same at thirty-two feet wide." (Page 8.)

If these figures are false, as I dare say they are, I did not make them. The facts are known only to the board, who put them in any way to suit themselves.

He next denies my calculations of the cost of improvements, pretending with true Pecksniffian obliquity of mind to understand me as referring to the expense of pavements alone. I repeat that my calculations, which were mainly based on the figures in the report, were correct; but I will now confirm them by others. I said the board must have spent from twelve to fourteen millions on streets alone, and gave several modes of estimating the amount. Without going over them again, which would confirm them, but take too long, I will add three other methods of computation. The reports of the board—all of them, for a wonder—contain a table of the cost of improving twenty-nine streets and one alley, a length of 91,608 front feet—not linear feet, be it understood, a deception which the board will use unless I anticipate it. A comparison of the distances on the accompanying tables proves conclusively that a foot front is meant; in other words, that both sides of the street are measured. Half of 91,608 feet is eight and a half miles, to which should be added by the board's own estimate twenty per cent. for intersections, giving about ten miles. At that rate fifty-six miles would cost $13,337,995.

Again, I have received the assessments for improvements on eight streets and two avenues in addition to the four streets and one avenue I gave before. These average $46 39, making a total of $13,708,073. The gentleman who gave me these tells me he asked for a copy of all the assessments at the office of the board, but was refused. This morning I was handed three more assessments, the average of which is still higher.

Mr. CHIPMAN. Will the gentleman state from whom he received those assessments?

Mr. ROOSEVELT. No, I will not; for I understand that the Board of Public Works would persecute the man. Men have come to me with fear and trembling and asked me to continue my efforts in this matter, but not to disclose their instrumentality, because they do not know what might happen to them. They feel assured they would be punished whenever it might be within the power of the Board of Public Works.

Now, gentlemen, these are not my figures; I have not made them up. I have taken them from the board, either in the report or such assessments as I have been able to get, or which have been brought to me voluntarily by gentlemen interested in this matter.

It is impossible to bring out any less result, and the attempts of the gentleman only prove this, for he has selected the two cheapest streets in the city—Fourth and Twelfth—to be used to refute my calculations. On Fourth street there was no grading and no sewering to be done, and on Twelfth street only $300 for sewering, and very little grading. This evasion on his part is practically a confession of the truth of my assertions. I have taken the assessment on every street I could get hold of, omitting none and only asking for more. He would select the two cheapest in the city. In confirmation, I have been told of an assessment on one house of twenty-five feet wide of $1,000, and on a lot which cost $350 of $850. This beats the finest efforts of New York fleecers in their palmiest days. There, where two thirds and not one third is

charged to the property, a thousand-dollar assessment on a hundred-foot corner lot was regarded as excessive and was the highest I ever heard of.

Having pretty effectually disposed of that, I will now take up the next point. I stated in my last speech that there were sixteen contracts extended, but for which no additional charge was carried out, and on these there was a difference of $530,905 72 of excess of liabilities not accounted for. These have been criticised in a statement of the Delegate from the District, and the amount put, not at $530,000, but only at $243,414 56. Now, that is a moderate mistake in sixteen contracts, is it not? But it is not the mistake they really make, because they doctored those contracts. My statement was strictly correct except one error made by the Globe proof-reader, and a mistake of eighty-one dollars made in running a line across. But after my speech was delivered a new report was issued and additional amounts inserted. Then they had the impudence deliberately to compare those with my statements and pretend I had blundered. But there was a difficulty in their way they had not considered, for after all there is some virtue in figures. They had previously inserted the sum total of their statement at $6,387,033 15, which is substantially correct, for it has been gone over by my associate on the committee, the gentleman from Illinois, [Mr. CREBS,] and found as near right as the board can make anything; that is, only a couple of hundred dollars out of the way. They add $170,000 to that amount; but the trouble is that then their figures will not add up right. They carry out the total the same, no changes being made in that; but they put in $170,000 that they have not accounted for. I suppose they thought I was not good at addition, and in that they were pretty near the truth. The way these alterations were made is this, and the changes probably involved the stereotyping of an entirely new report: beneath the figures which I gave they interlined others and connected the two with a bracket. On page 2, beneath D. Hudnell's contract of $753 68, they interlined $11,294 10; beneath Patrick Cullinane's contract of $19,969 40 and $8,499 they interlined $70,500; beneath Crowley's contract for $2,331 88 they interlined $10,868 50; beneath Neitzey's contract for $7,917 25 they interlined $51,465 30; beneath Campbell's $2,757 24 they interlined $21,964 56, and beneath Stafford's contract of $592 they interlined $8,246 30. None of these amounts were in the original report, and my statements were positively accurate. Any gentleman can see this by referring to this report, which I have gone over again carefully, the only two mistakes being one of eight cents, made probably in copying, and the second being an error of $81 69.

In connection with one contract, however, that of George W. Linville, I want to point out another performance of this most respectable and ingenuous board; for I take it that the board is responsible for these figures, not the Delegate from the District. I referred to the contracts made with Faetz and Murphy, and assigned by them to George W. Linville, and expressly so stated, referring to the two contracts that had been assigned by the pages of the original report, as there were no numbers to these contracts in that report, and I could designate them in no more accurate way. In his reply it was said the amount was $101,076 70, and he referred to the contract of George W. Linville of that amount. But, sir, this is a different contract, and it is hardly possible to suppose the person who got up the reply did not know it. I had given the pages at 4 and 11, and they give the page at 15, one being a direct contract to Mr. Linville, and the other two contracts assigned to him and described as such. So gentlemen will see this is another and most grossly palpable evasion.

They have admitted errors even under this new statement of $243,414 56; but, as they contend, there is omitted on the other side of canceled contracts, which you will recollect I referred to, but the amount I could not give because it is nowhere stated, an equal amount there is no error at all. They argue that as they made an error of $243,000 on the one side and $267,000 on the other side, I am guilty of a blunder of $540,000 in accusing them of making any mistake at all; which conclusion is barefaced and impudent enough to be funny. I do think the gentleman who prints such things or who utters such statements on the floor of this House should be held to responsibility for them. It seems almost incredible that any one should be bold enough to take such a stand, and only shows the calm confi-

dence of the Board of Works that they are not only above reach, but above criticism. The gentleman sums up the result in these words:

"This, bear in mind, Mr. Speaker, where the member from New York claims a discrepancy against the board of $530,987 33 in sixteen contracts; a trifling misrepresentation on his part of $554,648 20."

In other words, because they admit they have blundered on the both sides, those two blunders balance one another, and my statement of their blunders is not only incorrect, but a misrepresentation.

But they have not explained all of these omissions even now; they have only picked out a few, about fifteen, and undertaken to give us here and there what you may call their rerevised report as to these. There are about seventy contracts which were extended, and about seventy canceled, and they have pretended to correct sixteen. Perhaps the rest bear the same average, perhaps not. Who knows? Certainly neither this House nor myself. They claim they have omitted on sixteen so much money on the debit side, and on about twenty-five so much money on the credit side; but they say nothing of the additional forty on one side and fifty on the other, which are not carried out either as to their extension or cancellation.

The following is a list of extensions of contracts against which no sum is set down in the column of liabilities:

Six extensions on page 2, eleven extensions on page 3, eleven extensions on page 4, nine extensions on page 5, five extensions on page 6, eight extensions on page 7, four extensions on page 8, seven extensions on page 9, two extensions on page 10, four extensions on page 11, five extensions on page 12, four extensions on page 13, seven extensions on page 14, six extensions on page 15, four extensions on page 16, eight extensions on page 17, three extensions on page 18, two extensions on page 19, eight extensions on page 20, eight extensions on page 21, six extensions on page 22, six extensions on page 23, eleven extensions on page 24, six extensions on page 24, four extensions on page 25, three extensions on page 27, two extensions on page 28, one extension on page 29, one extension on page 30, one extension on page 31, one extension on page 32, four extensions on page 33, two extensions on page 34, two extensions on page 35, two extensions on page 36, three extensions on page 37—seventy-seven contracts extended.

Even in this amended statement they have made no effort to explain a vast number of other omissions. There are numerous original contracts against which no sum was carried out in their first or last statements, three being on page 15 alone. I point out No. 271, page 17, six feet six inch brick barrel sewer, &c., to Samuel Strong, no amount carried out, although the expense must have been very large. I will not attempt to particularize, however, and will merely say there are dozens of contracts in the same condition.

I will now examine the voucher on which the $1,240,000 appropriation of the United States was paid. Gentlemen will remember that a demand was made against the Government on the ground that a large amount of work had been done by the Board of Works in front of United States property. The items of this work were given in detail in the report to the President, even to feet and half feet of extent, but in the act appropriating the money a remeasurement was ordered to be made under the supervision of General Babcock. I expressly declared in the course of my previous remarks, and I renew the declaration now, that I cast no reflection on General Babcock. There may be differences of opinion between us, in which I am as likely to be wrong as himself; and I recognize the extreme difficulty under which he labored to get at accurate information, it being almost impossible to measure grading after the work has been done and the surface lines obliterated. It was not possible for him to dig up a sewer to ascertain the size of the pipe or the depth at which it had been laid, and in such matters he had mainly to rely on the assertions of the board. If they told him a sewer was an eighteen-inch tile pipe when it was only twelve, or that it was laid ten feet deep when it was only five, he had no means of detecting the imposition.

I think I can clearly show that he was misled or mistaken in certain matters, but by doing so I by no means intend charging him with complicity. Take, for instance, the sewer on G street along the City Hall reservation, for which he has allowed $3,200, whereas the contract (p. 13) is only for $1,571. So with the rate allowed for sewering, which he has put at $4 70 a lineal foot, whereas by looking over the tables of expenditures for sewers, including laying manholes, traps, and all complete, it never exceeds $3 50, and averages only about $2 50. These, however, are minor matters. I accept his measurement as substantially correct.

You will bear in mind that when I referred to General Babcock's voucher I explicitly said I had seen it in the Treasury Department, but that I had not examined it critically. I had merely glanced it, and had not gone over its details, but had been told by the clerk who

showed it to me that it proved the board's report to be correct to a dollar and a foot. Since then I have obtained a copy in full, which I hold here in my hand, and as you will see, it consists of sixty-six quarto pages, almost entirely composed of figures, so that it was utterly impossible for me in a momentary glance to make out what was in it.

But I do not want any better evidence than that very voucher for what I have stated about the utter worthlessness of the report of the Board of Works, and perhaps all but the blind adherents of the board will be surprised when I announce the fact that there is but a single item in the voucher of General Babcock, that I have been able to find, which accords with any item in their report. To give you a specimen of this, and to prove that I am correct, I will take up the matter of grading, not going into that of sewerage, or curbing, or anything else, as one class of work will answer for all. I have here a list of the items for grading, as charged by the Board of Public Works against the United States, contrasted with the amounts allowed by General Babcock, and I repeat that in only one instance is there any similarity:

Comparative statement of grading, as measured by the Board of Public Works and by General Babcock:

Gen. B. Cubic yards.	Locality.	B. of W. Cubic yards.
2,505	Pennsylvania av., 21st st. to Rock creek.	10,000
12,970	Pennsylvania av., 1st, 2d, and 3d sts.	None.
34,491	Pennsylvania av., 4th to 6th sts.	11,206
6,631	Pennsylvania av., 7th to 9th sts.	11,206
41,025	Fifteenth st. n. w., N. Y. av., &c.	33,000
11,480	Columbia Hospital.	None.
2,168	Pennsylvania av. and K st.	None.
4,578	P street circle.	None.
31,908	Scott square.	31,000
4,280	Rawlins square.	None.
18,030	Sixth st. s. w., B to B sts.	38,000
Not down.	Mississippi av., 6th to 3d st.	9,932
Not down.	Maine av., 6th to 3d st.	9,932
8,444	New York and New Jersey avenues.	Not distinguished.
	Cost lumped by board.....	$7,510
	Cost lumped by Gen. Babcock...	12,919
9,070	N. Y. av., 1st and M sts. comes in at same place as last item.	
7,170	Post Office.	11,200
None.	Stanton place.	27,780
None.	Marine barracks.	4,270
23,000	Providence Hospital.	23,000
21,905	Winder's building.	12,000
1,508	National Home.	3,000
7,370	Massachusetts av., 11th and 12th sts.	None.
7,370	Massachusetts av., 10th and 11th sts.	None.
4,000	Massachusetts av., 3d and 4th sts.	None.
5,860	Four-and-a-half street.	None.
11,777	Third street.	None.
3,345	Connecticut avenue.	Not down.
11,688	Connecticut av., 2d st. to R st.	Not down.
418	Massachusetts av. to M st. east.	Not down.
1,837	Massachusetts av. to M st. west.	Not down.
430	Reservation No. 7.	Not down.
295,227	.....Totals.....	235,526

Difference, 59,701 at forty cents, $25,880 40.

The item in relation to Providence park in both reports is $23,000, a round set of figures which look suspiciously as if arranged so as to mislead General Babcock. Now, gentlemen may say how did General Babcock make the amount larger than the Board of Public Works claim it to be? Because he allowed them for additional charges that they did not make in their report, and which they seem to have forgotten all about. This raises the very grave question whether he had any authority to do so; whether in his measurement of the work submitted to Congress, and for which Congress agreed to pay, he was not confined to those precise matters. But it is far more strange that the board should have omitted claims against the Government of hundreds of thousands of dollars at a time when they were stretching every point to get as much money as possible.

The position I take, however, and which this voucher entirely confirms, is that the report of the board is utterly unreliable, and that the figures it contains might as well have been drawn from a hat, so far as accuracy is concerned. A favorite performance of the defunct New York ring was to meet all investigations by a mass of incomprehensible and contradictory figures. When anybody "wanted to know, you know," they overwhelmed him with a mass of tables, accounts, and statements, dumped out anyhow and everyhow, and if he waded through them they gave him as many more, ever ready with a new batch, and explanations, and corrections, and continuations as extensive as the original supply, till the investigator was crushed into silence and submission.

The Washington ring seems to be pursuing the same tactics, and when you observe that in five pages of closely segregated figures there is hardly one true one you can judge of the difficulty of exposing all their misstatements. General Babcock convicts or condemns the board and their report more fully and completely than I have done, and nothing more is needed than his statement to show that all their accounts ought to be overhauled.

I have heard of monstrous overcharges outside of those made against the Government, but of these I can offer no positive proof; they are assertions, not official evidence. In one instance it was alleged that nine thousand feet

of curbing was charged for while only three thousand was laid ; in another, that incredible amounts of grading were paid for while but little was done, and that there are enormous over-measurements of street pavements. Property-holders openly allege that they have had the work estimated for which they are charged in their assessments for improvements, and that the one third they are required to pay amounts to more than the total cost should have been. These facts I cannot prove, but General Babcock proves all I want.

In old days when it was asserted that one half the money paid by the tax-payers of New York was squandered the charge was pooh-poohed as impossible ; it was said such assertions were preposterous ; but when the matter came before the judicial tribunals it was conclusively proved that all but fifteen per cent. was misappropriated. I can only say I doubt if this city even gets fifteen per cent. in value for the money expended. Congress has now been investigating this board since January last, and yet can any one say that anything is known of their operations? We see streets dug down everywhere, shade-trees ruthlessly destroyed, sidewalks torn up and worthless pavements laid, but have we any idea of the cost or extent of these performances or of the financial condition of the board? After all these reports are we any wiser than when we began?

The board's undertakings are on the most magnificent scale. After expending their vandalism on the streets they attacked the harbor and proposed a so-called improvement which would have given a profit to the lucky speculators of $30,000,000.

They have before us—not before us, but they have talked of—a scheme to move the President's Mansion from where it is up to what is called the Little farm, involving perhaps $20,000,000 more of profit. They have grasped at the railroads of this city, and got possession of them all but the Pennsylvania line, I believe. And they have attempted to take the Globe printing. They are grabbing for everything, and they intend when they have got through to be the sole owners of property in the District of Columbia, and that no poor men shall reside in the capital of this great nation which has heretofore been regarded as the asylum for the poor of the world.

I am not opposed to improving and beautifying this city. I am desirous even that the debts contracted by this board should be paid, especially to the laboring men who are not expected to discriminate in matters of authority when employed to do work; but I insist that such operations shall be carried on carefully, honestly, economically, and according to law. I insist that Congress shall not be insulted and the President misled by such fabricated reports, such manuals of spoliation as they should more properly be called; that there shall be no concealments, but that what is done shall be known to the people to be judged by them.

The law as originally passed by Congress provided that no improvements should be made except in pursuance of specific appropriations by the District Legislature, but this requirement has been utterly set at naught. The comprehensive plan as submitted to the Legislature and there approved was not a bad one, and had it been carried out gradually it would have met general approval; but it has been utterly disregarded.

The prices of all the work were first raised to suit a system by which contracts were given out to favorites and not let to the lowest bidder. By the original plan grading was to be twenty-five cents a cubic yard;that was increased to forty cents; curbing was raised from a dollar to a dollar and a half; macadamizing from a dollar to a dollar and a half; the Tiber sewering from sixty dollars a foot to $102 50, and so on. Moreover it was expressly stipulated and provided that no work should be done unless at a rate twenty per cent. less than even these prices as first adopted. In practice, hardly any work has been done as provided by the "comprehensive plan" approved by the Legislature, and none at the prices therein established and for which appropriations were made. The total of all improvements authorized was $8.222,996, from which twenty per cent., $1,644,559, was to be deducted, leaving $6,578,397 to pay for certain results and not to be expended unless it would produce those results. Instead of that, totally different works have been done at greatly increased prices.

Congress has just authorized the Secretary of the Navy to build six vessels of war, and appropriated so much money for the purpose. Suppose he were to build a fort instead, what would Congress say? But, again, suppose he spent it in beautifying public grounds near his own property and to its benefit, would not Congress at once demand his removal? This is precisely what the Board of Works has done. Take the matter of wooden pavement. All they were authorized to lay was as follows, there being no discretion left them to vary the kind of work or substitute different pavements:

Wooden pavements by comprehensive plan.

G street, 30,000 yards, at $2 per yard	$60,000
Fourteenth street, 55,000 yards, at $4 per yard,	220,000
K street, 8,000 yards, at $2 per yard	16,000
Four-and-a-half street, 50,600 yards, at $2 per yard	101,200
Seventh street, 23,194 yards, at $4 per yard	92,776
Pennsylvania avenue, 63,530 yards, at $4 per yard	264,120
Pennsylvania avenue, 50,000 yards, at $2 per yard	100,000
Total	$854,096

In the report to the President they state they have laid 762,903 yards at $3 50, equal to $2,670,160, an excess of almost $2,000,000 over the appropriation. The species of work was in all cases set out in the plan, which contained separate columns for that purpose, and where there was a pavement to be laid its kind was specified. In the matter of concrete pavements the disregard of law is still more flagrant, for there is no concrete whatever provided for under the act of the Legislature, actually no column for it in the "comprehensive plan," and yet they have laid sixteen miles of it according to their own report. This is a monstrous assumption of power and abuse of trust. An attempt is made to justify it under the report of a board of engineers which in a qualified way indorses concrete against the experience of every city in the United States. But who gave any body of such experts authority to change an act of the Assembly, or make legal what was otherwise prohibited? That report, however, will do them little good; it comes at once too soon and too late. It is dated May 15, 1872, before which time they had been laying concrete extensively, and since which time they have laid wooden pavements. That report condemns wooden pavements; and if it is to be authority, no more wooden ones should be used, and yet two contracts for them have been entered into since November 1, 1872, as appears by the supplementary statement made to the Committee for the District of Columbia by the Board of Works, that for Second and Third streets east, November 15, Phillip's wooden pavement, $10,310, and November 18, De Golyer wooden pavement, $33,250.

The fact is, as was proved in the investigation last year, that concrete pavement laid as it is here only costs about seventy cents a yard, leaving a clear profit for somebody of $2 50. That it is utterly worthless needs no board of experts to prove. A man with a stout pair of boots could with them alone dig up half the concrete pavement in Washington before he wore the heels off. The model piece in front of the Arlington Hotel, which was laid at great expense, and by its endurance brought so much evil on the city, has been extended by the same parties through Scott square under the authority of the Board of Works, but so badly that on a dry day it is like a country road, and the foul and injurious dust is what would be popularly called ankle deep. In windy weather this dust, driven into the houses, will ruin everything it touches; it will fill curtains, carpets, and furniture; and then melting under the heat of fires, will run like tar, and defile whatever may come in contact with it. As for wooden pavements, the Board of Works have themselves given their opinion about them in their notes to their original comprehensive plan, as follows:

"The board is satisfied, upon careful consideration, that as a rule the value of property in the District will not warrant the general introduction of wood or other expensive pavements, and that, if at all used, they should be confined to a few of the principal avenues of communication. It is believed that road-beds of stone, more durable and equally free from dust and mud, can be constructed at less cost than has usually been paid for the most ordinary kind of stone pavements."

In disposing of this subject I warn residents in this District not to be deceived by appearances; nothing is more beautiful than a concrete plaster when first put down. It is as handsome as a mustard-plaster, and both are about equally nasty when they have been applied for a short time. The improvements made by the board are like life: "life is all a fleeting show," and so are they. In two years every concrete abomination will have returned

to dust, and in two more the wooden affairs will have resolved themselves into typhoid fever.

The Delegate from the District has stated in his speech that the certificates of assessment have been tested before the supreme court of this District and pronounced valid. In this he is mistaken. Actions were commenced by property-holders for injunctions, and the court merely decided that these suits were premature and unnecessary, on the ground that there was a good defense at law if an attempt should be made to enforce them. Had the gentleman been a lawyer he would have been acquainted with the familiar rule of practice, that no application can be made to the equity side of a court where there is a legal defense which is broad enough to cover the requirements of the case. Otherwise a person, instead of defending a suit on a note, might ask the court to enjoin the holder from suing it, and thus practically do away with legal jurisdiction. So far from these certificates being held valid, it was strongly intimated in the opinion of the court, if I am not mistaken, that they were void; and such would certainly be the opinion of lawyers generally.

I cannot follow the gentleman through all his other vagaries of assertion, and point out his omissions or mistakes; as where he quotes the opinion of Mr. Blair in favor of improvements, but does not add that Mr. Blair stated he expected the improvements to cost $30,000,000; or where he says that the taxes have not been increased, but does not add that they never are, so long as a city is borrowing money and can pay its interest from its principal. As an evidence of the expenses of the District government, I will, however, quote a table from a speech made by me last year which settles the matter of economical administration:

Statement showing the amount appropriated for executive officers, printing, advertising, and contingencies by the following States during the year 1871, *and by the District of Columbia for the fiscal year ending June* 30, 1872; *also, showing the population and number of square miles in each.*

States.	Population of the last census.	Square miles.	Salaries of executive officers.	Printing and advertising.	Contingencies.	Total amount.
New York	4,387,464	47,000	$139,550	$175,000	$19,200	$323,750
Maine	626,915	31,760	65,133	35,000	17,400	117,533
New Hampshire	318,300	9,280	12,341	9,830	2,099	24,270
Massachusetts	1,457,351	7,800	234,205	98,531	30,300	363,036
Rhode Island	217,353	1,300	16,908	3,500	Included.	20,408
Connecticut	537,454	4,670	59,800	98,875	Included.	158,675
New Jersey	906,096	8,320	46,187	82,625	7,655	136,468
Ohio	2,665,260	39,960	73,275	75,300	13,250	183,925
Wisconsin	1,064,985	53,920	65,983	54,569	17,008	137,540
Iowa	1,192,092	55,040	41,205	49,495	22,433	113,133
Illinois	2,539,891	55,410	26,753	50,000	39,108	115,861
District of Columbia	131,700	60	449,220	143,635	200,000	792,855

He has introduced into his speech a most outrageous and uncalled for attack on a gentleman in this city who has given me some assistance, and to whom I am and the District ought to be obliged for it, and I now speak in order to defend him as a matter of justice. He has stated that Mr. Crane was accused in a criminal trial in court of being unworthy of belief, and that a number of witnesses were called to testify to this fact. That is true, but is it the whole truth? On the contrary, is it not a clear case of what lawyers call *suppressio veri*? It is true, some dozen of witnesses were called from among the followers of the Board of Public Works or contractors, who had been denounced by him for fraudulent practices when he was in official position, who said they would not believe him under oath. He did not add, however, that this so-called criminal trial was a prosecution instituted by Mr. Crane for libel, and that when his character was attacked he summoned eighty-

five of the leading gentlemen of this city, every one of whom testified to his character as being above reproach. Among these were Mayor Wallach, Mayor Emery, George W. Riggs, John D. Blake, and other gentlemen of the highest standing, who sustained him so strongly, that before he got through with calling them as witnesses the judge stopped him, and told him it was no longer necessary.

Bear in mind that this reflection is made on an honest man by the Board of Works. See how they strike at him because he opposed their operations. Judge, then, why I do not receive more public assistance from residents in this District. Yet I assure you residents came to me privately, enough of them ; not Democrats, but Republicans, nine out of ten of them, for I have always said fraud was no question of party; not whites alone, but very often negroes; especially men of no great wealth, who see the certainty of the property they have accumulated passing out of their hands into the hands of this grasping Board of Public Works.

Shall I desert these men? Shall I sit silent as a member of a committee before which such things come and allow them to go on without my protest? It is true my constituents are not robbed, but they are largely of Irish and German birth or descent, and I can answer for the generous sympathy of the Irish heart and the strong Teutonic hatred of dishonesty, that they will thank me for my efforts almost as much as though they had been made in their behalf. To show how downtrodden and intimidated the citizens of Washington are, I will read a letter I have just received:

WASHINGTON, *February* 10, 1873.

DEAR SIR: As a taxpayer of this District I have been much interested in the discussions in the House of Representatives in regard to the expenditures of the Board of Public Works of this District, and having accidentally got hold of a leaf of a pamphlet which I suppose to be part of the report of the Board of Public Works to Congress at the first of the present session. I thought I would call your attention to what seems to me very strange items in the "expenditures of James A. Magruder." This leaf being pages 63 and 64. On page 63, dated, I believe, October 15, 1872, (this is page 159 of the report of the Board of Public Works,) was the following item: "To —— Buckley, S street south, from First to Seventh streets west, $1,300." Now, a glance at any map of the city will show you that S street south does not exist beyond Four-and-a-half street on the west, and as the arsenal wall comes up to P street, all of S street west of the James Creek canal is three squares within the arsenal grounds; and as for reaching Seventh street west by way of S street south, you would have to pave and grade across the channel of the river, as Seventh street strikes the river bank about L street. There is also another item, though small, on the same page, thus: "October 17, 1872, to B. Smith & Co., brick for S street south, from Third to Four-and-a-half street." This you will observe is within the arsenal grounds entirely.

If they claim that the printer made a mistake and put south for north, it is just as bad, for although S street north does reach Seventh street west, a glance at the map will show you that it does not reach First street by two or three squares, it striking the boundary about Third or Fourth.

This report, I believe, was reprinted at the Government Printing Office, and though the page number may be different, you can find these items by the dates. If such a number of evidences of fraud can be found on a single page casually picked up, what a vast number there must be in the whole document?

As I am in a situation to be materially injured by "Boss" Aleck, I feel constrained to make this an anonymous communication.

Yours, &c., A TAXPAYER.

Hon. R. B. ROOSEVELT.

It may be asked why do these men come to me. I shall not assume to say. Perhaps they think their own Representative neglectful of them ; perhaps they thought he was against them when they came before the committee of investigation, or perhaps they think he is too firm a believer in the immaculate purity of the Board of Works. Certain it is, that so long as the board remain in power he will be the Delegate from the District. That gentleman has in his speech indulged in sundry hackneyed quotations. I would advise him to buy a dictionary of quotations before he tries again, that he may get them nearer right. In one of these he couples me in the future state of existence with Mr. Crane. When that time comes the company of an honest, though a poor man, will not be despised. But I am afraid if the gentlemnn selects his companions there as he has here he will find his quarters uncomfortably warm, even in days as cold as those of the past severe winter.

It has been charged that I have animosity against the members of the Board of Public Works. I have none. Their acts alone are what I condemn. Last Thursday week the Committee for the District of Columbia addressed them certain questions. Receiving no answer last Thursday, they were requested to answer forthwith such of them as they could answer at once. Four days have expired since then, and yet no reply has been received to a single interrogatory. Among these were, in substance, whether they had used up the fund of the District appropriated for police, fire, and school purposes; whether they had borrowed money, how much they owed their laborers, and how much of the appropriation of Congress was still unexpended.

It is clear these could be answered at once, and among all there were at most two that could by any construction involve a delay of twenty-four hours. So Congress is still kept in the dark, while day after day come up schemes for giving the board more money. They have stated in their accounts there was a balance to their credit. We have given them $1,240,000 more, and yet they are clamoring for an additional $2,000,000. On their statement the following report was made, under my motion to inquire into the debt of the District:

"3d. As to the third inquiry involved in the resolution, to wit, 'what sum will be required to finish the work undertaken by the board?' the committee report that from the communications herewith submitted, and the printed report of the board, no further sums will be required to complete the work undertaken, *and for which liabilities have been incurred*, than those included in the foregoing estimates."

Let gentlemen bear this in mind when the ever recurring cry of "Give, give!" is raised again. Let us believe that the board occasionally tells the truth. Tammany Hall was twelve years in reaching its worst state of corruption, but the Board of Public Works in the District of Columbia seems to have been born rotten.

I have done, and hope never again to be called upon to say a word more on this subject. The responsibility is now with the House, and my duty is finished. These facts have come before me from my official position. Congress is in possession of them. In making them public I have earned the hate of vulgar power. But there is justice in the skies, and when it falls dishonesty will slink away into its natural obscurity. Amid this wilderness of figures I should expect to have blundered. In picking out these numerous contradictions I might readily have gone wrong; but so far not one mistake has been brought home to me. The labor involved has been great, and it is with sincere sense of relief that I find myself discharged from further responsibility.

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